

# The Relationship Between Employee's Status Perception and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors: A Psychological Path of Work Vitality

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**Purpose:** Studies have shown that status-based rankings exist within almost every human social group and influence most aspects of organizational life. However, few studies have discussed the relationship between employees' status and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs). Based on social cognitive theory, this paper explores the relationship between employees' status perception and two types of OCBs: challenging and affiliative, as well as the mechanism underlying this relationship by introducing work vitality as the mediator and dominance motivation as the moderator.

**Methods:** We collected the empirical data from different enterprises located in major cities in China following a two-stage sampling procedure. The final sample consists of 330 employees. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis.

**Results:** Employee status perception is positively related to work vitality ( $b = 0.103$ ,  $p = 0.027$ ), challenging OCBs ( $b = 0.160$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and affiliative OCBs ( $b = 0.105$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ). Work vitality mediates the relationship between employee status perception and challenging OCBs with 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals [0.004, 0.063], and it also mediates the relationship between employee status perception and affiliative OCBs with 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals [0.004, 0.049]. The interaction of status perception and dominance motivation is significantly related to work vitality ( $b = 0.121$ ,  $p = 0.041$ ). Specifically, when dominance motivation is at low level, the effect of status perception on work vitality is  $-0.008$  (non-significant); when dominance motivation is high level, the effect is  $0.175$  ( $p = 0.005$ ).

**Conclusion:** The result suggests that employees' perceptions of status are positively and significantly related to their challenging and affiliative OCBs, and employee's work vitality mediates this relationship. It further indicates that dominance motivation moderates the relation between status perception and work vitality. Specifically, the positive relationship between employee status perception and work vitality is stronger when an employee has high dominance motivation than low dominance motivation.

**Keywords:** status perception, work vitality, taking charge behavior, helping behavior, dominance motivation

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## Introduction

For the past decade, studies of organizational citizenship behaviors have been ubiquitous in the fields of organizational psychology and organizational behaviors.<sup>1-4</sup> This is unsurprising, as organizations operate in environments that are volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambivalent.<sup>5</sup> To successfully adapt to such dynamic business environments,

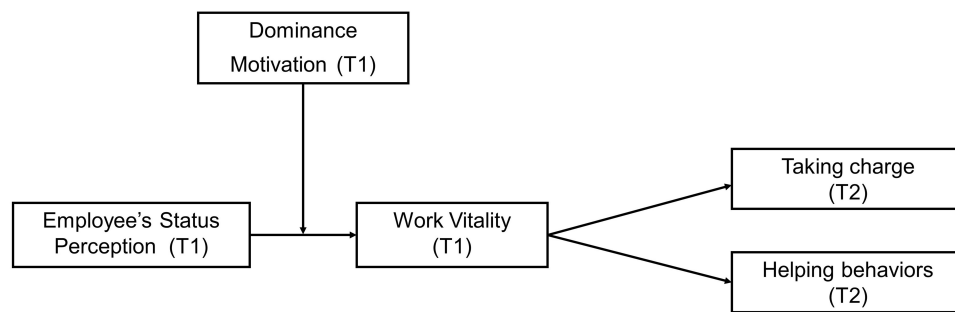
organizations require their employees to exhibit deep involvement and high commitment to their jobs and organizations. As a result, many studies focus on organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), which help organizations to be more adaptive and competitive.<sup>6–8</sup> Existing studies have found many antecedents or determinants of OCBs such as job satisfaction,<sup>9,10</sup> job engagement/ embeddedness,<sup>11</sup> organizational commitment,<sup>12,13</sup> HR practices,<sup>14,15</sup> self-efficacy,<sup>1,16</sup> self-serving motives,<sup>17</sup> leadership styles.<sup>18</sup> Noticing that as the research field develops, OCBs are categorized according to their two main functions: affiliative behaviors and challenging behaviors.<sup>18,19</sup> Affiliative OCBs are behaviors that strengthen relationships in the workplace: they are interpersonal, cooperative, and noncontroversial. A typical affiliative OCB is helping behavior, which studies have identified as having a significant influence on the group and organizational performance.<sup>20</sup> Challenging OCBs are behaviors that seek to change the status quo and improve an organization. Such behaviors are usually issue-focused and change-oriented.<sup>1</sup> For instance, taking charge behavior is regarded as a challenging OCB because it “tries to bring change about”.<sup>1,18</sup> Many studies concluded both helping and taking charge behavior as representations of distinct forms of OCBs (affiliative vs challenging) in their research,<sup>18,21–23</sup> and suggested that capturing these contrasting behaviors is more meaningful and important for research as today’s organizations always shift between “stability and change, smooth functioning and discontinuity”.<sup>24</sup> From a contingency perspective, Li et al note that affiliative behaviors exert a positive influence in relatively stable organizational contexts, whereas challenging behaviors are more helpful for organizations in complex and unpredictable environments.<sup>18</sup> As organizations’ business environments can shift over time between stable and unstable states, both affiliative and challenging OCBs are helpful to an organization’s survival and success. For this reason, many studies examine both types simultaneously to develop a more holistic view.<sup>18,25</sup>

In this paper, we investigated an employee’s self-perceived status which refers to the focal employee’s perception of his/her relative position within an organization or a group.<sup>26</sup> Studies of the organization and group dynamics begin with the observation that status-based rankings exist within almost every type of human social group, and studies have shown that status influences most aspects of organizational life.<sup>27,28</sup> However, few studies have discussed the relationship between employees’ status and OCBs. The social cognitive theory suggests that an individual’s cognition and subsequent behaviors are influenced by their perceptions of their embeddedness

in a social system such as an organization or group.<sup>29,30</sup> In working groups and organizations, employees who perceive themselves as high-status exhibit more confidence in their organizations or groups<sup>28</sup> which may affect their behaviors. Drawing on social cognitive theory,<sup>29</sup> this paper discusses the relationship between status and (affiliative and challenging) OCBs and the mechanism that underlies this relationship.

This study aims to investigate the relationship between status perception and two forms of employee OCB (ie, taking charge and helping behaviors), thus filling a gap in the literature. It also uses social cognitive theory to further explore the mechanism linking employee status to OCBs. We introduce work vitality as a mediator between status perception and OCBs. Work vitality is defined as a psychological state in which individuals feel energetic and have great enthusiasm for work.<sup>31</sup> Porath et al consider work vitality as a positive emotional basis for the psychological experience of personal development.<sup>32</sup> According to social cognitive theory, individuals’ psychological and physiological conditions would influence their assessments of abilities or in other words, self-efficacy.<sup>33</sup> We argue that high-status members may experience more work vitality and become more proactive and positive in the workplace. Moreover, this paper examines the boundary conditions of the relationship between employee status perception and employee OCBs. Specifically, we argue that dominance motivation—which drives personal striving for status, prestige, and domination within an organization or group—may play an important moderating role in our focal relationship. We argue that dominance motivation serves as an important personal factor in determining individuals’ feelings and attitudes toward status perception. Drawing on social cognitive theory, the personal factors would interact with other factors (such as cognitive and environmental factors) and influence people’s psychological state.<sup>29</sup>

Our research makes three contributions to the literature. (i) Drawing on social cognitive theory, this paper extends our understanding of employee status by examining the link between status perception and employee OCBs. (ii) We use physiological and psychological perspectives to explore the mechanism that underlies the aforementioned relationship. Specifically, we chose work vitality as the mediator to extend our understanding of the mechanism that mediates the relationship between status perception and OCBs. (iii) We extend the status and achievement motivation literature by exploring and explaining the moderating effect of dominance motivation and the moderated mediation mechanism. The research model is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** The theoretical research model.

## Literature Review and Hypotheses

### Employee Status Perception, Taking Charge, and Helping Behaviors

Considered as one type of the most important behavioral outcomes that benefit the organization, OCBs have been widely studied for the past decade. And the study on OCBs' antecedents has drawn great attention, scholars find that job satisfaction,<sup>9,10</sup> job engagement/ embeddedness,<sup>11</sup> organizational commitment,<sup>12,13</sup> self-efficacy<sup>1,16</sup> and self-serving motives<sup>17</sup> are important antecedents of OCBs. Some studies switch focus from personal perspective to organizational perspective and find that human resource practices and leadership styles are also critical determinants of OCBs.<sup>14,15,18</sup> Although the literatures on the antecedents of OCBs seem to be fruitful and well developed, a large body of these studies only focuses on general forms of OCBs which only focus on self-voluntary and pro-social aspects of such behavior. More recent studies suggest that there are two complementary types of citizenship, namely affiliative OCBs and challenging OCBs.<sup>21,23</sup> As mentioned, affiliative OCBs are behaviors that focus on building and maintaining relationships in the workplace, while challenging OCBs are behaviors that seek to change the status quo and make improvements for the organization.<sup>21</sup> In most studies on affiliative and challenging OCBs, the measurement of helping behavior was adopted to assess affiliative OCBs and the measurement of taking charge behavior was used to assess challenging OCBs.<sup>22,23</sup> Chiaburu et al suggest that affiliative and challenging forms of OCBs reflect prosocial and proactive aspects of citizenship behaviors,<sup>22</sup> and socio analytic theory supports the idea that employees participate in both forms of OCBs to "fulfill their needs for getting along with and getting ahead of others." The socio analytic perspective of OCBs also relates to the concept of self-perceived status at the workplace which is insufficiently studied in the literature of the antecedents of OCBs.

Employee status perception is an employee's perception and evaluation of his/her relative position within an organization or a group. It usually reflects an individual's non-official status.<sup>34</sup> Most studies use measures of an individual's prestige, influence, and perceived support in an organization to capture his/her general status.<sup>28,35</sup> Some studies show that members with high-status perception have a greater sense of self-worth and organizational belonging,<sup>36,37</sup> and those members also exhibit higher psychological entitlement, self-confidence, and self-esteem.<sup>38</sup> Other studies show that high status improves individual self-satisfaction and overall social satisfaction.<sup>28,34,39</sup> Furthermore, when self-needs and social needs are matched and both are satisfied, individuals will consider themselves to be more capable of realizing their expectations and influencing others.<sup>40</sup>

Taking charge behaviors as challenging OCBs are the constructive efforts spontaneously and voluntarily generated by employees to improve work procedures or methods in the workplace. This kind of effort occurs when members are actively thinking about how to perform their tasks and responsibilities more effectively, and how to improve the operational efficiency of the organization.<sup>1</sup> Studies have found positive relationships between taking charge behavior and many employee outcome variables, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance.<sup>41,42</sup> Taking charge behavior is also inherently risky for employees because it challenges the status quo of the organization.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, individuals need to make certain rational cognitive decisions and conduct risk evaluations before deciding whether to engage in taking charge behavior.<sup>21</sup>

According to social cognitive theory, individuals' behaviors are shaped and determined by the constant interaction of environmental, cognitive, and behavioral factors.<sup>43</sup> The environmental factors are social norms, cultures, and influences on others; the cognitive factors are knowledge,

expectations, and attitudes; and the behavioral factors are skills, practice, and self-efficacy.<sup>29</sup> Thus, we propose that status perception can influence employees' behaviors in their organizations.

Prior research has established that employees with high-status perception consider themselves being able to access more organizational resources and are more influential.<sup>26</sup> These resources can be tangible, such as material resources, or intangible, such as power, relationships, and psychological resources. Therefore, employees who perceived themselves as high status have a strong sense of control and feel more capable of influencing others. At the same time, not only do they feel respected, praised, and helped by others but are also likely to expect such treatment; in other words, they hold positive expectations about others' responses and conduct toward them. As a result, they usually show more trust in others and worry less than low-status employees about the risk of challenging the organizational status quo (eg, taking charge behaviors). Furthermore, the resources and social support associated with high status can increase an individual's positive cognitions, such as self-efficacy beliefs and expectations about conducting OCBs.<sup>44,45</sup> Fuller et al find that if employees are given high organizational status in the organization, they will be more proactive in organization-supportive behaviors and will focus more on constructive change.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, high-status members can handle the risks of taking charge better than others due to their advantageous social position in the group. Combining the previous arguments, we argue that self-perceived status is a cognitive-motivational state that facilitates taking charge of behaviors.

A similar argument can explain the influence of high-status perception on employee helping behaviors. Employee helping behaviors refer to employees' voluntarily helping others to avoid work errors and solve work problems.<sup>20</sup> Deng et al suggest that high-status individuals may engage in more helping behaviors to maintain a good image.<sup>47</sup> Many studies show that helping colleagues not only improves personal image but also brings in additional benefits. For instance, Bolino finds that helping leads to positive feedback from the leader.<sup>48</sup> Clary and Snyder find that employees with more helping behaviors achieve more in their careers.<sup>49</sup> Nowak's study shows that people are prone to help those who have helped them.<sup>50</sup> Lount and Pettit find that individuals with perceived high-status are more likely to be generous to others and to gain more trust than others.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, individuals with perceived high-status are more willing to help others to obtain high-quality reciprocal relationships,<sup>47,52</sup> which will further

consolidate their high status. Other studies show that high-status members have higher external social expectations<sup>53</sup> and that their views are more easily accepted and praised by others.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, individuals with perceived high status tend to believe that their help behaviors will be accepted and are more willing to actively show their kindness and to accept care from others in return.<sup>54,55</sup> According to the above discussion, we posit that:

Hypothesis 1a: Employee's Status perception is positively related to taking charge.

Hypothesis 1b: Employee's Status perception is positively related to helping behavior.

## The Mediating Role of Work Vitality

Work vitality refers to a positive feeling that one has sufficient energy at work.<sup>31</sup> Individuals with high work vitality usually feel alive and energized, and they approach life with energy, enthusiasm, vigor, and excitement. They always do things wholeheartedly and will stick with a job to the end.<sup>56</sup> Spreitzer et al suggest that when individuals perceive that they have control over and are capable of mastering the challenges at work, they will experience vitality and will thrive at work.<sup>31</sup> Positive social factors, such as high-quality connections, are important antecedents of vitality.<sup>57</sup> A positive social environment normally provides people with important and positive psychological effects (eg, psychological safety) that trigger a feeling of vitality.<sup>56,58</sup> According to Spreitzer et al's work, positive relational resources increase an employee's sense of agency, which will lead to individual development and vitality.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, many studies have linked social resources to physiological changes in the neuroendocrine, cardiovascular, and immune systems.<sup>59,60</sup> These physiological factors influence an individual's openness to experience and enhance their capacity to act,<sup>61</sup> factors that are closely related to work vitality. Thus, individuals with perceived high status are more likely to have positive social resources,<sup>36,37,40</sup> which promote positive physiological and psychological experiences and eventually lead to greater work vitality.

According to social cognitive theory, individuals rely on psychological and physiological conditions to assess their abilities and then engage in targeted behaviors.<sup>33</sup> As work vitality consists of both positive psychological and physiological experiences, it is an important factor in their behaviors. Individuals with high work vitality experience a psychological state of aliveness, they feel that their actions in life and at work are more meaningful and purposeful, they have positive expectations about the future, and they feel great about their physical circumstances.<sup>56,62</sup> Such employees usually feel



more confident and have greater self-efficacy and work embeddedness, which leads to creative solutions to work issues and improvements in job performance.<sup>63,64</sup> Energetic employees usually display agile thinking, strong work motivation, high work efficiency,<sup>65</sup> and a high level of job embeddedness.<sup>32</sup> In a recent meta-analysis, Kleine et al find that work vitality correlates significantly and positively with creative performance.<sup>66</sup> As extra-role behaviors that challenge the status quo, taking charge behaviors are similar to creative and innovative behaviors, such as problem-solving.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, we posit that employees with high work vitality are more energized to resolve work issues and more capable of engaging in taking charge behaviors.

Besides, as vitality is a reinforcing experience, individuals try to “enhance, prolong, or reenact the circumstances they perceive as increasing their vital energy”<sup>56</sup> and try to avoid negative situations that diminish their vitality. That is, when employees feel vitality at work, they want to maintain the positive affect and motivation, and thus tend to enhance, prolong, or reenact the supportive circumstances by engaging in pro-social acts, which make them feel better. Studies have also shown that employees with positive affect and emotions usually empathize with and provide emotional support to others.<sup>68</sup> Accordingly, we posit that high vitality employees are more inclined to help others. Drawing on the above discussion, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2a: Work vitality mediates the positive relationship between status perception and taking charge.

Hypothesis 2b: Work vitality mediates the positive relationship between status perception and helping behavior.

## The Moderating Role of Dominance Motivation

The unequal distribution of power and resources is common in human societies and leads to hierarchical power structures.<sup>69,70</sup> In various social groups, such structures become solidified over time, “making it increasingly difficult for subordinates to change their social status and to access valuable resources or prestige”.<sup>71</sup> Accordingly, individuals may on the one hand advocate for equality to avoid social harm and deal with cognitive dissonance caused by inequality.<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, they may be motivated to attain advantageous social positions (high status) and become dominant.<sup>73,74</sup> Social psychology scholars suggest that people possess various domain-specific motivations that guide different human behaviors.<sup>75</sup> Maner and Mead

suggest that dominance motivation is an important factor in individuals’ desire to attain and use power and in maintaining social hierarchies.<sup>76</sup> According to social cognitive theory, the interaction of individuals’ cognition and personal factors influence their psychological state.<sup>29</sup>

In this paper, we argue that dominance motivation plays an important role in determining individuals’ feelings and attitudes toward status perception. Individuals with greater dominance motivation are more eager to attain high social status.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, the high status will give individuals access to abundant tangible and intangible resources and social respect.<sup>77,78</sup> When individuals’ dominance motivation is high, they care more about attaining the resources and power that are related to high status.<sup>79</sup> In this case, perceived high status will make individuals with high dominance motivation more satisfied and lead to a more positive affect and greater vitality.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, as individuals who are high in dominance motivation are more aware of their status, they are able to perceive when their status is high and feel satisfied that they have achieved the goal of a better position in the group hierarchy. Prior research shows that achievement motivation is significantly related to people’s physical and psychological well-being.<sup>80</sup> Thereby, as a subset of achievement motivation, dominance motivation will bring pleasant feelings and positive outcomes to individuals when it is fulfilled.<sup>81</sup> It will also further strengthen the relationship between perception of status and work vitality. In contrast, when individuals are low in dominance motivation, the positive relationship between status perception and vitality might be weaker or even non-significant because these individuals are not strongly motivated to gain higher social status. Accordingly, we argue that high-status individuals are more likely to experience vitality at work when their innate dominance motivation is high, and low-dominance motivation individuals may not enjoy the advantages of perceived high status as much as high-dominance individuals. Thus, we hypothesize as follows:

Hypothesis 3: Dominance motivation moderates the relationship between employee’s status perception and work vitality; such that when dominance motivation is high, the positive relationship between employee’s status perception and work vitality is stronger, and vice versa.

Taking these findings as a whole, we can infer that dominance motivation moderates the relationship between perception of status and work vitality, and thus affects individuals’ helping and taking charge behaviors.

Specifically, in individuals with high dominance motivation, perception of high status will be better translated into work vitality, which will positively affect their behaviors. Accordingly, the hypothesized relationships we posit are presented as follows:

Hypothesis 4a: Dominance motivation moderates the mediation effect of work vitality on the relationship between employee's status perception and taking charge; such that when dominance motivation is high, the mediation effect will be stronger, and vice versa.

Hypothesis 4b: Dominance motivation moderates the mediation effect of work vitality on the relationship between employee's status perception and helping behavior; such that when dominance motivation is high, the mediation effect will be stronger, and vice versa.

## Method

### Sample and Procedures

We collected data from different companies located in major cities in China. To maximize the generalizability of our results, the companies were selected from various industries, including manufacturing, IT, real estate, biotechnology, and the healthcare industry. We sealed the survey questionnaires in envelopes and mailed them to the HR departments of the selected companies. A time-lagged technique was used in this study to reduce common method bias, as scholars suggested that this may "reduce the salience of the predictor variable or its accessibility in memory".<sup>82</sup> The HR departments helped us to collect two waves of data at a two-month interval. In the first round of data collection, the participants were asked to report their status perception, dominance motivation, work vitality, and demographic data. In the second round of data collection, they were asked to report their taking charge and helping behaviors.

We distributed 1000 questionnaires in the first round of data collection and received 560 back, giving a 56% response rate. In the second round, 365 out of the 560 questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 65%. After dropping responses with missing data and a few invalid questionnaires (eg, had the same answer for every survey question), our final sample consisted of 330 participants. In the final sample, 61% were male and 39% were female. Their average age was 31 years, 83% were between 22 and 35 years old, 65% had 3-year college degrees or above, 35% had a high school education or below, and their average length of organizational tenure was 8 years.

## Measurement Scales and Analysis Tools

All scales we used in the current research came from the English version originally. Given the fact that the research was conducted in China, we followed a "Translation and Back-translation procedure" that was widely applied to various cross-cultural studies, and all scales were translated to adapt to the Chinese language environments.<sup>83</sup> All variables were measured on five-point Likert scales where 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree.

Status perception (T1). Employee's perception of self-status was measured following Janssen and Gao's three-item scale measurement.<sup>26</sup> Sample item as "I have a lot of status within the team". All ratings were on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 as above mentioned (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.765$ ).

Work vitality (T1). A four-item scale adapted from Spreitzer et al's work was used to measure an employee's sense of work vitality.<sup>84</sup> Sample items were "I feel alive and vital" and "I am looking forward to each new day" (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.861$ ).

Dominance motivation (T1). Four items were adapted from Cassidy and Lynn's work to measure employee's dominance motivation.<sup>81</sup> Sample items included "If given the chance I would make a good leader of people" and "I like to give orders and get things going" (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.746$ ).

Taking charge behaviors (T2). We adopted Morrison and Phelps's ten-item scale to measure employees' taking charge behaviors.<sup>1</sup> A sample item was "I try to bring about improved procedures for the work unit or department" (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.905$ ).

Helping behaviors (T2). A Three-item scale revised from Lee et al's study was used to measure employee's proactive helping behaviors.<sup>85</sup> A sample item was "Without being asked, today I helped coworkers avoid potential problems with their work" (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.759$ ).

Control variables (T1). The demographic variables were controlled in our analysis following the suggestions of other organizational behavior studies that investigating employee's OCBs, such as taking charge.<sup>1,86</sup> Therefore, gender (2 = female, 1 = male), age (in years), education level (1 = high school or below, 2 = associate's degree, 3 = bachelor's degree, 4 = master's degree, 5 = doctoral degree) and work tenure (in years) were included as control variables.

## Results

### Confirmatory Factor Analyses, Descriptive Statistics, and Correlations

In order to make further analysis, a CFA (confirmatory factor analysis) must be done to examine the discriminant validity of the research variables. We used Mplus 7.4 to run the CFA and first assessed a five-factor model for all variables including status perception, work vitality, taking charge, helping behaviors, and dominance motivation. We applied correlations between error terms according to item content.<sup>87</sup> By allowing four correlations between items of taking charge, one correlation between items of the work vitality, and one correlation between items of the dominance motivation, we achieved an acceptable model fit. The five-factor model's fit indexes:  $\chi^2 = 557.131$ ;  $df = 236$ ; CFI = 0.916; TLI = 0.901; RMSEA = 0.064; SRMR = 0.068. Then, we combined variables collected in T1 and run a three-factor analysis, the indexes are  $\chi^2 = 1095.119$ ;  $df = 243$ ; CFI = 0.776; TLI = 0.745; RMSEA = 0.103; SRMR = 0.113. After analyzing the three-factor, we combined variables collected in T2 and analyze the two-factor model; In the end, we combined all variables into a one-factor model and run the CFA analysis. Table 1 shows the CFA results after we applied correlations between error terms, these results indicate that the five-factor model has the best fit and is appropriate for further analysis. Following Podsakoff et al's work, we also conducted Harman's one-factor analysis to test for common method variance.<sup>82</sup> The results show that the variance of the first factor explains 30.95% of the total variance (smaller than the 40% threshold), indicating that the fit of Harman's one-factor analysis is unacceptable.<sup>88</sup> In other words, our data do not suffer from common method variance. The descriptive statistics, inter-correlations for the research variables are also shown in Table 2 as follows.

## Hypothesis Testing

To test our hypothesis, we first used hierarchical multiple regression and then used the bootstrapping and regression

method developed by Hayes to further check the moderated mediation effect.<sup>89</sup> As we can see from Table 3 which we set work vitality as the dependent variable for hierarchical multiple regression analysis, employee status perception is significantly related to work vitality ( $b = 0.103$ ,  $p = 0.027$ ), and the interaction of status perception and dominance motivation are significantly related to work vitality ( $b = 0.121$ ,  $p = 0.041$ ). These results provide a promising supportive signal to further analyze the mediation and moderation effect.

Table 4 presents the results of hierarchical multiple regression analysis for taking charge as the dependent variable. As shown, status perception is positively related to taking charge behaviors significantly ( $b = 0.160$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), which supports hypothesis 1a. Table 5 presents the results of setting helping behaviors as the dependent variable. The status perception is also significantly related to helping ( $b = 0.105$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ), which supports hypothesis 1b.

To check the mediation effect, work vitality is significantly related to taking charge when we entered all the variables ( $b = 0.268$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) as Table 4 shows, which provides support for hypothesis 2a from Baron and Kenny's method.<sup>90</sup> Work vitality is also significantly related to helping when all the variables were entered ( $b = 0.210$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) as Table 5 shows, which provides potential support for hypothesis 2b. To ensure the mediation effect, we run the mediation analysis alone following Hayes's work to give more confident support of our hypotheses 2a and 2b.<sup>91</sup> The results show that the mediation effect of work vitality is significant (95% CI is [0.004, 0.063] and [0.004, 0.049], respectively). Combining with the previous analysis, we can infer that the hypothesis 2a and 2b are supported.

To check the moderating effect, the results of model 3 in Table 3 show that the interaction of dominance motivation and status perception is significantly related to work vitality ( $b = 0.121$ ,  $p = 0.041$ ). Specifically, when dominance motivation is at a low level (-sd), the effect of status perception on work vitality is  $-0.008$  (n.s.); when dominance motivation is high level (+sd), the effect is  $0.175$  ( $p = 0.005$ ). Thus hypothesis 3 is supported.

**Table 1** Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Model	CMIN	DF	RMSEA	SRMR	CFI	TLI	CMIN/DF
One factor model: SP + WV + TC + HB + DM	1383.492	246	0.119	0.104	0.701	0.664	5.624
Two factor model: SP + WV + DM, TC + HB	1262.849	245	0.112	0.118	0.732	0.698	5.154
Three factor model: SP + DM+WV, TC, HB	1095.119	243	0.103	0.113	0.776	0.745	4.507
Five factor model: SP, WV, TC, HB, DM	557.131	236	0.064	0.068	0.916	0.901	2.361

**Abbreviations:** SP, status perception; WV, work vitality; TC, taking charge; HB, helping behavior; DM, dominance motivation; CMIN, Chi-square; DF, degree of freedom; RMSEA, root-mean-square error of approximation; SRMR, standardized root mean square residual; CFI, comparative fit index; TLI, Tucker–Lewis index.

**Table 2** Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender	1.390	0.489	1								
2. Age	30.680	6.595	-0.008	1							
3. Education	2.720	0.707	0.017	-0.032	1						
4. Tenue	7.940	6.663	-0.014	0.967**	-0.232**	1					
5. Status perception	2.725	0.938	-0.178**	0.056	-0.010	0.042	1				
6. Work vitality	3.756	0.785	-0.177**	-0.017	0.006	-0.017	0.149**	1			
7. Taking charge	3.388	0.666	-0.170**	0.116*	-0.019	0.105	0.254**	0.356**	1		
8. Helping behavior	3.889	0.650	-0.147**	0.162**	0.003	0.149**	0.184**	0.284**	0.430**	1	
9. Dominance Motivation	2.820	0.751	-0.201**	0.007	-0.012	0.017	0.298**	-0.112*	0.429**	0.254**	1

Notes: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$  (two tailed).

**Table 3** Regression Analyses for Work Vitality

Predictor Variables	Work Vitality					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE
<b>Control</b>						
Gender	-0.249***	0.089	-0.237***	0.090	-0.237**	0.088
Age	-0.007	0.040	-0.004	0.040	-0.009	0.042
Education	0.018	0.097	0.013	0.097	0.030	0.106
Tenue	0.004	0.040	0.002	0.040	0.006	0.042
<b>Independent variable</b>						
Status perception	0.103*	0.046	0.091	0.048	-0.259	0.184
<b>Moderator</b>						
Dominance Motivation			0.053	0.060	-0.285	0.167
<b>Interaction</b>						
Status perception $\times$ Dominance Motivation					0.121*	0.059

Notes: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  (two tailed).

**Table 4** Regression Analyses for Taking Charge

Predictor Variables	Taking Charge					
	Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE
<b>Control</b>						
Gender	-0.176*	0.073	-0.150*	0.071	-0.109	0.070
Age	0.008	0.033	0.022	0.032	0.010	0.031
Education	0.031	0.081	0.004	0.077	0.026	0.076
Tenue	0.003	0.033	-0.010	0.032	0.001	0.032
<b>Independent variable</b>						
Status perception	0.160***	0.039			0.133***	0.037
<b>Mediator</b>						
Work vitality			0.287***	0.044	0.268***	0.044

Notes: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  (two tailed).



**Table 5** Regression Analyses for Helping Behavior

Predictor Variables	Helping Behaviors					
	Model 7		Model 8		Model 9	
	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE
<b>Control</b>						
Gender	−0.159*	0.072	−0.131	0.070	−0.106	0.071
Age	0.032	0.032	0.040	0.031	0.033	0.031
Education	−0.021	0.079	−0.039	0.077	−0.025	0.077
Tenue	−0.017	0.033	−0.025	0.032	−0.018	0.032
<b>Independent variable</b>						
Status perception	0.105**	0.038			0.083*	0.037
<b>Mediator</b>						
Work vitality			0.222***	0.044	0.210***	0.044

Notes: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  (two tailed).

To further test our research model, we used the PROCESS macro of SPSS developed by Hayes to do more analysis.<sup>89</sup> We also set a bootstrapping sample of 5000 for the regression analysis and the significance of the effect we tested was computed based on bias-corrected confidence intervals. Tables 6 and 7 includes the results of regressions testing hypotheses 4a and 4b.

For testing taking charge behaviors as the dependent variable, the 95% CI of total moderated mediation effect is [0.001, 0.075], indicating a significant moderated mediation effect. More specifically, as Table 6 shown, the indirect effect which represents the mediation effect of work vitality on the relationship between status perception and taking charge behaviors is significant when dominance motivation is at a high level ( $b = 0.047$ , 95% CI is [0.012, 0.092]), and non-significant when dominance motivation is at a low level ( $b = -0.002$ , 95% CI is [−0.044, 0.036]). Therefore, hypothesis 4a is supported.

For testing helping behaviors as the dependent variable, the 95% CI of total moderated mediation effect is [0.002, 0.062], indicating a significant moderated mediation effect. More specifically, as Table 7 shown, the indirect effect which represents the mediation effect of work vitality on the relationship between status perception and helping behaviors is significant when dominance motivation is at a high level ( $b = 0.037$ , 95% CI is [0.009, 0.076]), and non-significant when dominance motivation is at a low level ( $b = -0.002$ , 95% CI is [−0.038, 0.026]). Accordingly, hypothesis 4b is supported. The interaction effect of status perception and dominance motivation on work vitality is shown in Figure 2.

**Table 6** Moderated Regression Analyses with Bootstrapping by SPSS PROCESS (Taking Charge as Outcome)

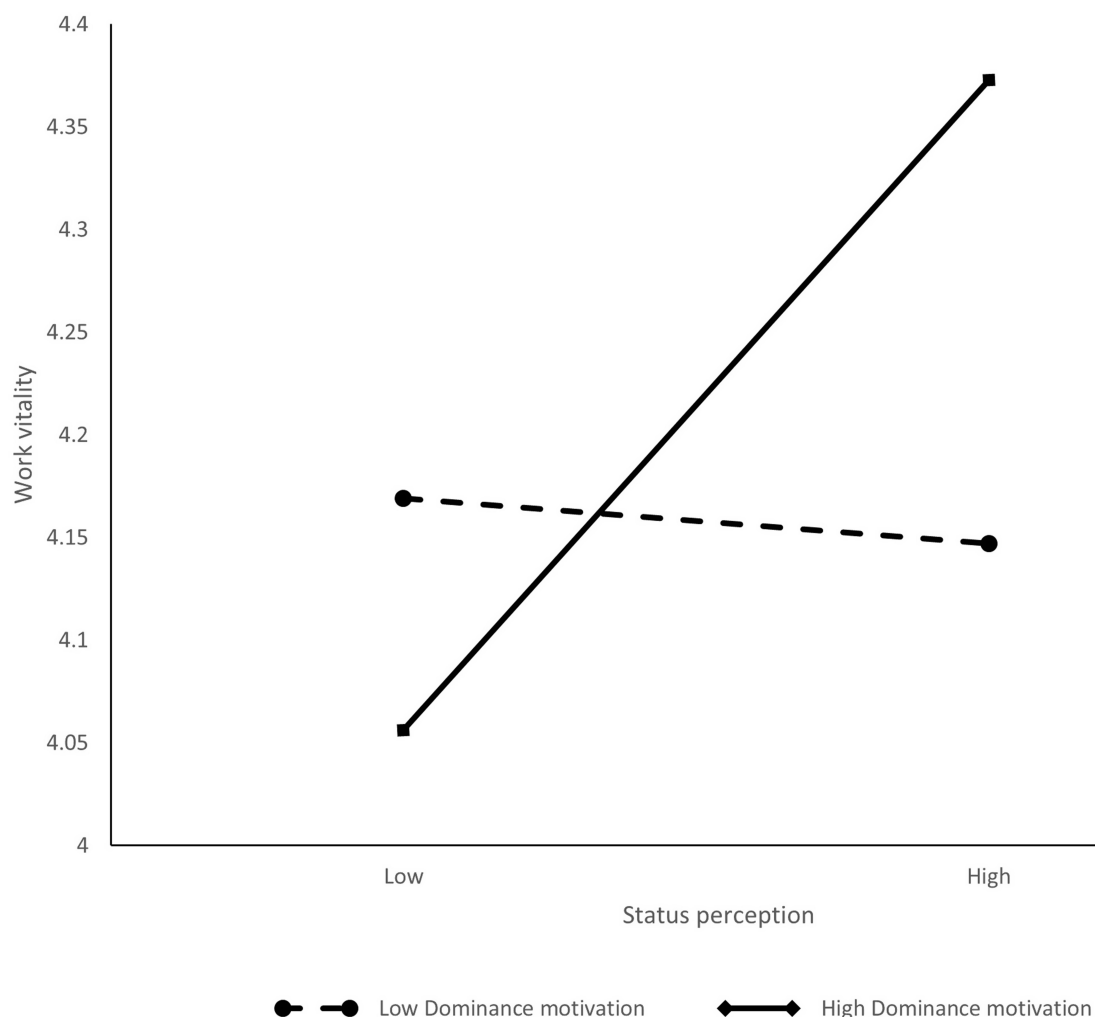
Conditional Indirect Effect At Specific Values of Dominance Motivation					
Moderator	Level	Taking Charge			
		Conditional Indirect Effect	SE	Bias-Corrected 95% CI	
Dominance motivation	Low	−0.002	0.020	−0.044	0.036
	High	0.047	0.021	0.012	0.092

**Table 7** Moderated Regression Analyses with Bootstrapping by SPSS PROCESS (Helping Behavior as Outcome)

Conditional Indirect Effect At Specific Values of Dominance Motivation					
Moderator	Level	Helping Behavior			
		Conditional Indirect Effect	SE	Bias-Corrected 95% CI	
Dominance motivation	Low	−0.002	0.016	−0.038	0.026
	High	0.037	0.017	0.009	0.076

## Discussion

Based on social cognitive theory, this paper proposed a theoretical model explicating the relationship between employee status perception and OCBs (ie, taking charge and helping behaviors), as well as the mediation effect and



**Figure 2** Interaction effect of perceived status and dominance motivation on work vitality.

boundary condition. We collected two-wave time-lagged data from enterprises in mainland China to test the model. The results show that status perception is positively related to both taking charge and helping behaviors and work vitality serves as a mediator. Moreover, Employees' dominance motivation moderates the relationships between status perception and taking charge/helping behaviors and the mediating effect of work vitality for these relationships. When dominance motivation is high, the positive relationships and their mediating mechanism are stronger.

## Theoretical Contribution

Our research makes three contributions. First, we test the influence of employees' status perception on the two types of organizational citizenship behaviors: challenging and affiliative OCBs. Previous studies have shown a link between status and employee citizenship or

proactive behaviors,<sup>26,47</sup> but there are few studies disentangle the relationship between status perception and these two types of OCBs. From a more holistic perspective, we use taking charge and helping behaviors as representations of employees' OCBs. Social cognitive theory suggests that there is a "triadic reciprocal causation" between behavioral, cognitive and environmental factors, it also emphasis that individual's induced beliefs on his/her controllability and capability would strongly affect the self-regulatory process and behavior. Drawing on this social cognitive perspective, this study extends the relevant literatures by disentangling the relationship between employee status perception and OCBs. As H1a and H1b are supported in our empirical study, we suggest that increasing employee's status perception may help improve their sense of control in their work and thereby increase their OCBs.

Second, this study explores how work vitality mediates the relationship between employees' status perception and OCBs. Although some scholars have examined the relationship between status and proactive behaviors,<sup>26,47</sup> the mediating mechanism remains unclear. Studies that link individual physiological changes to the neuroendocrine, cardiovascular, and immune systems to social factors such as status, resources, and relationships<sup>59,60</sup> have led organizational researchers to study the role of physiological factors in workplace behaviors. These physiological factors have been found to influence an individual's openness to experience and an enhanced capacity to act,<sup>61</sup> which are closely related to work vitality. Our paper combines the physiological perspective with the psychological perspective and tests work vitality as a mediating variable between status perception and OCBs. Based social cognitive theory, we open the black box of the mechanism that links status perception to OCBs. As H2a and H2b get supported, our study extends the literatures of social cognitive theory by suggesting that positive beliefs about one's ability can also energize the employee physiologically while previous studies primarily focus on self-efficacy perceptions.

Third, our research also explores the boundary condition for the relationship between employee status perception and OCBs and the interactive effect of dominance motivation and status perception on work vitality. As mentioned above, when dominance motivation serves as a basic and vital social hierarchy navigation strategy for an individual, he/she will be particularly invested in endorsing ideologies that justify the hierarchical structure.<sup>71</sup> Thus, when people's dominance motivation is high, the positive relationship between their status perception and work vitality is more salient, as is the indirect relationship between status perception and OCBs via work vitality. As H3, H4a and H4b get supported in this study, the results show that the interaction of individuals' goal motivation and status perception are fairly important as social cognitive theory suggests.

## Practical Implication

For organizations and group leaders that wish to promote organizational citizenship behaviors, this paper provides three suggestions. First, organizations and group leaders need to facilitate appropriate social hierarchies within organizations or groups. Although today's organizations promote flat and flexible structures, this does not mean that there are no social hierarchies or that employees have

no sense of their relative position and status within an organization or group. When organizations and group leaders appreciate employees' suggestions and ideas, this may increase those employees' perceptions of their status. In addition, leaders should consider sharing more power, resources, and responsibilities with appropriate employees, as this will increase the employees' perceived status and hence their OCBs.

Second, our research shows that the positive relationship between status perception and OCBs via work vitality is only significant when an individual's dominance motivation is high. This means that the suggestions given above for promoting employees' status might not work all the time. Leaders must determine which employees are most likely to engage in more OCBs once they have attained higher status. Moreover, when leaders promote individuals with high dominance motivation, they should make sure that the organization's procedures emphasize justice and fairness. Leaders always need to control how such employees acquire and use power. When leaders promote individuals with low dominance motivation, they must make sure that they are motivated to work and that they will fulfill their responsibilities as high-status members of the organization. Also, it would be useful to provide them with appropriate leadership training.

Third, as the results show that work vitality can indirectly promote challenging and affiliative OCBs, leaders can adopt management practices that boost employees' feelings of vitality and motivation. For example, management could gamify certain organizational procedures or introduce challenging but non-work-related activities. Such practices may increase employees' work vitality and eventually improve organizational or group outcomes.

Finally, it is important to avoid bias in personnel practices such as hiring, selecting or prompting talents. The results of our research model suggest that there is no significant influence of dispositional factors such as gender, age, education and tenure that on employee OCBs. Also as mentioned, employees with either high or low dominance motivation can explicit their value when they are embedded in the right working context.

## Limitation and Future Directions

The current study has some limitations, which could be considered in future studies. First, although we use a two-wave time-lagged data collection strategy, which may address some of the concerns about the causal relationships between our variables, the sample still suffers from

the same source issue. Although, Carpenter et al's work suggests that the mean difference between self-raters and other-raters on OCBs is rather small.<sup>92</sup> In the future, we need to consider multiple sources for the ratings.

Second, previous studies have treated work vitality and learning as components of thriving at work.<sup>31,66</sup> This study only discusses work vitality as a major positive psychological state for employees because vitality is an affective experience and positive energy is more direct and fundamental to individuals' emotional experience. It would be worthwhile to explore whether perceived self-status influences employees' positive attitude toward learning at work and thus affects their behavioral outcomes. "Learning" entails individuals' positive feelings about acquiring and applying knowledge and skills.<sup>31</sup> High-status employees may feel more capable of acquiring knowledge because of their easy access to more resources, but they also show low motivation to gain and use some types of knowledge and skills, as they have already attained high social status. Future studies should explore the mediating mechanism and boundary conditions of this relationship.

Third, this study draws on motivation theory to examine the moderating effect of personal dominance motivation. According to the literature, there are different types of achievement motivations, such as prestige motivation. It would be interesting for future studies to test the influence of other types of achievement motivations.

Fourth, although social cognitive theory explains the interaction of internal and external factors that drive individual's behaviors,<sup>93</sup> which would provide good theoretical foundation on our research model. Switching theoretical perspective may still help us to better understand how status influence employee's different behaviors. For example, from identity perspective, employees' status perception may affect the formation of identities based on social hierarchies or work positions and then lead to behaviors that highly related to certain identity. From social exchange perspective, higher status perception may signify higher exchange qualities with leaders and coworkers which will lead to more proactive and trust-based behaviors. Thus, it's worthwhile to take different theoretical perspective or lens to look at the relationship between status perception and sequent behavioral outcomes.

## Conclusion

This study explores how perceived employee status affects two different OCBs: helping behavior, an affiliative OCB, and taking charge, a challenging OCB. We introduce work vitality as an important mediator and dominance motivation as the

moderator. The results show that employee status perception is positively related to both helping and taking charge behaviors. This relationship is mediated by work vitality, and dominance motivation strengthens the mediation effect.

The contributions of this study can be summarized as follows. First, this paper examines the relationship between employee status perception and two different types of employee OCBs. Second, we identify the mechanism of that relationship by theorizing the mediating effect of work vitality. Third, we explore the boundary condition of the relationship between status perception and OCBs via work vitality.

## Ethical Statement

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee on Human Experimentation of Wuhan Textile University and complied with the Declaration of Helsinki. The written informed consent form and an introduction of the purpose of our survey research were provided to all participants together with the questionnaires. We explained to the participants that this research adopts the principle of voluntary participation, and all the collected data would be kept strictly confidential, and the survey is only for research purposes so no individual or organization can access the data except our researchers. Before filling out the survey questionnaires, all participants claimed that they understand the purpose of our survey research and agree to participate voluntarily.

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## Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this work.

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